

## **Volunteer attorneys needed for foreclosure cases; court offers guidebook to help with the process**

**Albuquerque, New Mexico, October 8, 2021** — The Second Judicial District Court's Pro Bono Committee is seeking volunteer attorneys to represent Bernalillo County residents facing the potential loss of their home through foreclosure proceedings. Filings are expected to rise because of the federal government lifting the recent moratorium on mortgage foreclosures.



The foreclosure moratorium was imposed to address the economic hardship many Americans suffered in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The moratorium ended July 31, 2021. In addition, many governmental loans were also eligible for COVID related forbearance, which is temporary relief for monthly mortgage payments. As forbearances begin to expire, the Pro Bono Committee recognizes the need for volunteer

attorneys to assist with a potential rush of foreclosure cases.

The Second Judicial District Court's Foreclosure Settlement Program (FSP) facilitates mediations between lenders and borrowers that typically result in favorable outcomes for both sides. The program employs three attorney settlement facilitators and a program manager.

Since its 2016 inception, the FSP has been highly successful in assisting lenders and borrowers to reach settlements in foreclosure cases. Consequently, many homeowners are able to stay in their homes after entering into loan modification agreements.

Given the FSP's ability to facilitate settlement agreements, the Co-Chair of the Court's Pro Bono Committee, Judge Erin O'Connell, asked the FSP staff to develop a guidebook that would help volunteer attorneys advise distressed borrowers through the foreclosure process.

### **First of its kind**

"This Guidebook, the first of its kind in New Mexico, represents another step in Second Judicial District Court assisting the community beyond what we do on the bench as judges. The Pro Bono Committee extends its sincere thanks to the Court's FSP for this outstanding resource," said Judge O'Connell.

The 41-page guidebook enables attorneys to help homeowners assess their home retention options and minimize their losses. “Loss mitigation options for each individual homeowner depend on the type of mortgage loan they have,” said FSP Program Manager Chris Peck.

For this reason, the guidebook contains specific sections outlining loss mitigation strategies by loan type. Furthermore, the guidebook also addresses the general foreclosure process.

“The book is geared toward identifying COVID-relief options the federal government created to help people suffering from the financial hardship caused by the pandemic,” Peck said. “Over the next several months the FSP predicts most participants, especially those exiting forbearance, to qualify for COVID-relief options.”

Peck also noted the guidebook is not solely for attorneys assisting borrowers participating in the FSP. “The FSP staff created the guidebook to assist volunteer attorneys, but any attorney assisting in a mortgage foreclosure would find this book useful.”

The guidebook is available on the [court's website](#).